DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 388 474 RC 020 299

AUTHOR	Ferris, Jeri
TITLE	Native American Doctor: The Story of Susan LaFlesche Picotte.
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-87614-443-1
PUB DATE	91
NOTE	88p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Lerner Group, 241 First Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN 55401 (paperback: ISBN-0-87614-548-9, 1-7 copies, $6.95 each, 8-24 copies, 15% discount, 25 or more copies, 25% discount; hardbound: ISBN-0-87614-443-1, $17.50).
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Historical Materials (060)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Acculturation; Adolescent Literature; American Indian History; *American Indians; Biographies; Elementary Secondary Education; *Females; Higher Education; *Physicians; Reading Materials; United States History
IDENTIFIERS	*La Flesche (Susan); *Omaha (Tribe)

ABSTRACT

Susan LaFlesche Picotte was born in 1865 on the Omaha Reservation in Nebraska. Her father was chief of the Omahas even though he was only part Omaha. She liked school, and was educated at the reservation school, the Elizabeth Institute for Young Ladies in New Jersey, and the Hampton Institute in Virginia. Her desire to become a doctor began in childhood when she saw how little the white government doctor helped the Omahas. At Hampton, Susan met Dr. Martha Waldron, one of the country's few women doctors, and her conviction increased. She attended Women's Medical College in Philadelphia, and in 1889 she became the first Native American woman to graduate from medical school and returned to the reservation to help her tribe. She saw herself as a bridge for her people between old and new ways, and she acted as a translator, adviser, and teacher to the Omaha. She campaigned tirelessly against alcohol abuse, which killed her husband, and she was a constant champion for her people's rights. Her lifelong dream, to build a hospital on the reservation, became a reality 2 years before her death. Contains 25 references, an index, and many photographs. (TD)

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